

**Virginia Cave Board
Saturday, October 4, 2008
Grottoes Town Hall, Grottoes, Virginia**

MINUTES

Virginia Cave Board Members Present

Mr. Tom Lera, Chairman
Dr. David C. Culver
Ms. Babs Funkhouser
Mr. Andrew Harrison, PG
Dr. John R. Holsinger
Ms. Judy Molnar
Ms. Barbara L. Moss
Mr. Jesse J. Richardson
Mr. David Socky
Ms. Meredith Weberg

Virginia Cave Board Members Not Present

Dr. Daniel H. Doctor
Virginia Department of Historical Resources representative

DCR Staff Present

Mr. Joey Fagan
Mr. Tom Smith
Mr. Wil Orndorff

Others Present

Mr. Gary Moss

Call to Order

Mr. Tom Lera called the meeting to order at 1:00 p.m. and declared a quorum present.

Introduction and Announcements

Mr. Lera welcomed members of the Cave Board, DCR staff, and guests. All present introduced themselves.

Approval of Minutes from June 14, 2008

MOTION: Mr. Jesse Richardson moved that the minutes of the June 14, 2008 meeting of the Virginia Cave Board be approved as corrected.

SECOND: Ms. Meredith Weberg seconded.

DISCUSSION: None.

VOTE: Motion carried unanimously.

Treasury Report

Mr. Lera outlined grants recently received by the Virginia Cave Board. The Board now has funds available for the Virginia Cave Protection Signs as well as for publishing four issues of the Virginia Cave Owners' Newsletter. No formal treasurer's report was submitted.

Elections

Mr. Lera opened up the floor for nominations for the offices of Chairman and Vice-Chairman.

MOTION: Mr. Andrew Harrison moved that offices continue be filled by the slate of Mr. Lera for Chairman and Mr. David Socky for Vice Chairman.

SECOND: Ms. Weberg seconded.

DISCUSSION: None.

VOTE: Motion to re-elect the current slate of Mr. Lera as Chairman and Mr. Socky as Vice Chairman carried unanimously.

Old Business

Education and Outreach Committee

Ms. Meredith Weberg reported on the status of the Virginia Cave Owners' Newsletter. It is expected that the current issue of the newsletter will be printed and mailed before the end of October; draft copies of the newsletter were circulated to the Board. The deadline for articles for the next issue of the newsletter is January 10, 2009.

Ms. Weberg reported on plans to produce a poster on karst resources and watersheds in Virginia for Virginia Cave Week to address several of the Virginia Standards of Learning.

Ms. Babs Funkhouser announced that the cabin at Crystal Caverns at Hupp's Hill in Strasburg will become a Civil War Cluster Orientation Center/Regional Visitor Center for tourists visiting the Upper Shenandoah Valley. The new center will provide an excellent venue for educating the public about caves and karst resources.

Ms. Weberg reported that Mr. Andy Reeder, the Conservation Co-chair of the Virginia Region of the NSS and originator of the Virginia Karst Trail concept, has encouraged the Cave Board to move forward with work to establish the karst trail. Mr. Reeder has sent the Board a Draft Virginia Karst Trail Action Plan. (See related item below).

The Board discussed updates for the Virginia Cave Board website. Mr. Socky plans to produce PDF files for available back issues of the Cave Owners' Newsletter for posting on the website.

Joint Technical Committee

Mr. Andrew Harrison discussed the Cave Board's writing of a letter of support for The Nature Conservancy's purchase of the Cridlin Tract in Lee County Virginia. Dr. John Holsinger explained that protection of the Cridlin Tract is critical to ensure the protection of Unthanks Cave. Surface water flowing into a sinkhole on the Cridlin Tract flows into the stream in Unthanks Cave. Unthanks Cave is the type locality for *Holsingeria unthanksensis*, a State Listed aquatic cave-snail.

Mr. Harrison announced that the Virginia Cave Protection Signs commissioned by the Cave Board are now available. One of the signs was shown to the Board. The Virginia Speleological Survey (VSS) has agreed to coordinate and track the location and proper placement of the signs by caver volunteers from VSS and the Virginia Region of the National Speleological Society (VAR).

Mr. Harrison discussed planning for the Virginia Karst Trail, a thematic trail featuring various sites to showcase the karst resources around the Commonwealth. It is proposed for the project to start by developing plans for one or two initial sites that would serve as a model for subsequent stops to become part of the proposed Virginia Karst Trail. Ways in which the stops could be sequenced and organized for visitors with both driving and walking elements was discussed. Mr. Harrison noted that Bill Balfour of the Virginia DCR Natural Heritage Karst Program will be asked to assist with the project. Ms. Funkhouser described the karst interpretive walking trails she has developed at Crystal Caverns and asked the Cave Board to consider placing a cave and karst educational kiosk in the new visitor center at that site. Ms. Funkhouser will coordinate efforts by the Board to develop plans for the Virginia Karst Trail including seeking further input from the VAR and other stakeholders.

Mr. Wil Orndorff gave an update on the development of new stormwater management regulations by DCR. It is anticipated that the new draft regulations will go before the Virginia Soil and Water Conservation Board for approval sometime during the fall of 2008 before going through a series of steps that could lead to approval by the US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) as early as December 2009.

Virginia DCR Natural Heritage Karst Program

Mr. Orndorff reported that he made a presentation on Karst and Underground Injection Control (UIC) Class V Injection Wells in Virginia at the fifth Growing Communities on Karst Workshop on September 18, 2008 at Shepherdstown, West Virginia. The presentation resulted in a dialog between EPA and DCR regarding the reporting of improved sinkholes as Class V injection wells. EPA currently oversees the regulation of Class V injection wells in Virginia, but individual states may be granted regulatory authority under EPA rules.

Mr. Orndorff reported that work to define conservation sites for Virginia's significant caves is complete. Approximately 300 land areas comprising the cave conservation sites are integrated into the Virginia Natural Heritage Program data base, where they are used for screening during environmental review and conservation planning. Mr. Tom Smith described the DCR Natural Heritage Data Explorer and associated services and the role the DCR Natural Heritage Division plays in the State Environmental Review Process (SERP).

Virginia Cave Protection Signs

MOTION: Mr. Lera moved that the two forms prepared by DCR, the Virginia Cave Protection Sign Agreement Form and the Virginia Cave Protection Sign Placement Documentation Form, be used to formally track the whereabouts and placement of Cave Board Virginia Cave Protection Signs.

SECOND: Ms. Weberg seconded.

DISCUSSION: A line will be added to the form to document the disposition of any existing cave signs that are replaced.

VOTE: Motion carried unanimously.

Honaker Roadside Cave

Mr. Orndorff reported that VDOT has stabilized the site and fitted the entrance with a drop inlet that does not obstruct water, air, or nutrient flow into Honaker Roadside Cave. VDOT reports that it will register this stormwater-receiving karst feature as a Class V Injection Well with the US EPA.

New Business

Virginia Cave Board Show Cave Representatives

The Virginia Cave Board has named the following Board Members to represent the Board and to offer assistance to Virginia's show caves:

Crystal Caverns at Hupp's Hill – Ms. Babs Funkhouser
Dixie Caverns – Mr. David Socky
Endless Caverns – Mr. Tom Lera
Gap Cave at Cumberland Gap National Historic Park – Mr. David Socky
Grand Caverns – Ms. Judy Molnar
Luray Caverns – Ms. Babs Funkhouser
Caverns at Natural Bridge – Dr. Dan Doctor
Natural Tunnel State Park – Mr. David Socky
Shenandoah Caverns – Mr. Andrew Harrison
Skyline Caverns – Meredith Weberg

Cave Board representatives will present their respective show caves with a one of the new Virginia Cave Protection Signs for posting in each show cave.

Letter to US EPA Regarding Registration Karst Features as Class V Injection Wells

MOTION: Mr. Harrison moved that the Virginia Cave Board write a letter to the United States Environmental Protection Agency expressing the need for classifying stormwater-receiving karst features (aka “improved sinkholes”) as Class V Injection Wells and for establishing protocols requiring the registration of such sinkholes with the US EPA.

SECOND: Ms. Barbara Moss seconded.

DISCUSSION: It was noted that the term “karst features” is meant to include sinkholes, caves, or any other karst feature. The letter will offer the Cave Board’s assistance.

VOTE: Motion carried unanimously.

Letter to The Nature Conservancy in support of the purchase of the Cridlin Tract

MOTION: Mr. Lera moved that the Virginia Cave Board write a letter of support to The Nature Conservancy expressing the Cave Board’s endorsement of TNC’s application to the Virginia Land Conservation Foundation for funding to assist with the purchase of a 140 acre tract in Lee County, Virginia for the purpose of protecting the biologically important cave stream in Unthanks Natural Area Preserve.

SECOND: Mr. Socky seconded.

DISCUSSION: Protection of this tract is important in the overall conservation strategy for the protection of the cave stream that runs through Unthanks Cave. Unthanks Cave provides habitat for the aquatic cave-snail, *Holsingeria unthanksensis*, as well as riparian habitat for both the Powell Valley Terrestrial Cave Isopod, *Amerigoniscus henroti*, and the Delicate Cave Beetle, *Pseudanophthalmus delicatus*.

VOTE: Motion carried unanimously

Establishment of the Ad Hoc Sinkhole Protection Committee

The Board discussed various ordinances that protect karst resources. Mr. Lera described a recently introduced Pennsylvania water protection act that would designate and regulate geologically active areas including sinkholes. Karst hazards in Virginia and sinkhole insurance were discussed. Mr. Richardson noted several existing ordinances in Virginia that attempt to address karst-related issues. He observed that such karst issues would best be addressed through zoning ordinances rather than subdivision ordinances. Mr. Richardson expressed the clear need for more data detailing the location of sinkholes and other karst features for use by local governments and planners. Mr. Lera appointed Mr. Richardson to chair an ad hoc Sinkhole Protection Committee. Mr. Richardson asked Mr. Orndorff to serve on the committee.

Cave Protection

Mr. Tom Smith reported that in 2007, The Nature Conservancy received a Virginia Land Conservation Foundation grant to assist with the purchase of land containing the globally significant Gallohan-Surgenor Cave System in Lee County. The closing on a 250-acre tract containing Surgenor Cave is expected to occur in December 2008. Negotiations are progressing with the owners of Gallohan Cave; it is hoped that the 30-acre tract containing Gallohan Caves #1 and #2 might be purchased sometime in the coming year.

Mr. Smith announced that a 23-acre tract will soon be added to the Ogdens Cave Natural Area Preserve in Frederick County.

Announcements

Mr. Fagan reported that Dr. Dan Doctor attended the 11th Multidisciplinary Conference on Sinkholes and the Engineering and Environmental Impacts of Karst, held September 22 – 26, 2008 at Tallahassee, Florida.

Mr. Lera announced the 3rd National Cave and Karst Conservancies Forum will be held March 12 - 13, 2009 at Lewisburg, West Virginia.

The National Speleological Society Board of Governors will meet in Richmond, Virginia on November 8, 2008.

The West Virginia Cave Conservancy will hold its annual banquet on November 15, 2008 at Lewisburg, West Virginia.

The 15th International Congress of Speleology will be held July 19 – 26, 2009 at Kerrville, Texas.

Dates for Future Cave Board Meetings

- Meeting: January 10, 2009 at Grand Caverns at Grottoes, Virginia.
- Meeting: April 18, 2009 at Endless Caverns at New Market, Virginia.

Thanks to the Town of Grottoes for Hosting Meeting

Mr. Lera expressed thanks on behalf of the Cave Board to the Town of Grottoes for hosting the meeting and the staff of Grand Caverns for their assistance.

Adjournment

Mr. Lera adjourned the meeting at 2:25 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Thomas Lera
Board Chairman

Joseph H. Fagan
Secretary